

NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information, Contact:

Molly Sander
Michelle Feist
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2378
E-mail: msander@nd.gov
mafeist@nd.gov

North Dakota Department of Health Urges Everyone To Get a Flu Shot This Season

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health is reminding all North Dakotans of the importance of receiving a flu shot, according to Molly Sander, Immunization Program manager for the Department of Health.

“There is plenty of flu vaccine this year, so we are urging everyone to get a flu shot to avoid influenza, regardless of age or health status,” Sander said. “Getting a flu shot is the easiest and most effective way to protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu.”

Each year, more than 400 North Dakotans die as a result of complications from influenza and pneumonia, and hundreds more are hospitalized, according to Michelle Feist, Influenza Surveillance coordinator for the Department of Health. In North Dakota, the influenza season usually does not peak until after the New Year, so there is still sufficient time for people to be vaccinated. “It’s never too late to get a flu shot,” Feist said.

Vanessa Gedrose, a student at Bismarck State College, received her flu shot today from a Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health nurse. “Flu is a serious illness,” Gedrose said. “Even though I am healthy and have no health conditions that put me at risk for flu-related complications, I get my flu shot. As a student, I simply can’t afford to miss a week of school or work.”

A few years ago, the flu struck Casimer Jochim, a senior citizen from Mandan. “I was so sick from the flu that I couldn’t do my chores,” Jochim said. “That taught me how important the flu shot is. Since then, I’ve gotten a flu shot every year, and the flu hasn’t gotten me. Everyone should get a flu shot.”

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The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone be vaccinated against the flu, especially the following people at high-risk for complications:

- All children ages 6 months through 4 years
- All adults age 50 and older
- Residents of long-term care facilities
- People of any age who have long-term health problems, such as:
 - Heart disease
 - Lung disease
 - Kidney disease
 - Diabetes
 - Asthma
 - Anemia
 - Weakened immune systems due to HIV/AIDS and cancer treatments
 - Breathing problems due to neuromuscular disorders
- Pregnant women

People who could spread the disease to those at high risk – such as health-care workers, out-of-home caregivers and household contacts – also should be vaccinated.

Typical flu symptoms include fever, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, muscle aches and extreme fatigue.

For information about vaccine availability, people should contact their doctor, local public health unit or pharmacist. For information about influenza, visit www.ndflu.com.

REMEMBER: A flu shot can protect not only you, but everyone around you.

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